A SERMON

Preach'd to the

SOCIETIES

FOR

Reformation of MANNERS,

AT

SALTERS-HALL,

JUNE 29, 1730.

By THOMAS LEAVESLEY.

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Luke XII, 14.

And he said unto him, Man, who made me a Judge, or a Divider over you?

AFTER a long State of universal Corruption, wherein various Dispensations of God's Providence to restore the World to Righteousness and good Order, had prov'd Ineffectual, * *In the last apointed Time of Reformation God sends his own Son into the World to call Sinners to Repentance.*

THE Way was prepar'd by that illustrious and zealous Reformer *John* the *Baptist*, whose wonderful Birth, holy Life, pure Doctrine, and zealous Preaching † *drew out*

* *Heb.* ix, 10. † *Mark* i, 5.

all the Land of Judea, *and them of* Jeruſalem *to him in the Wilderneſs, and put them upon the Confeſſion of their Sins and Vows of Reformation.*

THE Way of the Lord thus prepared, *Jeſus* ſets himſelf at the Head of a new SOCIETY for *Reformation.* When he * *had continued all Night in Prayer, he call'd his Diſciples, and choſe Twelve, and nam'd them Apoſtles.* And as his whole Life and Converſation was a Pattern to them for their Behaviour in the Work; ſo it appears to have been the moſt particular Care, and Buſineſs of his Life, to inſtruct, animate and encourage his Apoſtles, to go on with this Work, as the great Buſineſs of theirs.

HE ſcarce ever diſcours'd publickly, or privately, to them, but with this View, and the greateſt Part of the Goſpel Narrative turns upon this: His Parables are full of it, his Miracles, his Promiſes ſtill were directed to this, that they might with conſummate Wiſdom, with unquenchable Zeal, and unfainting Perſeverance purſue this Work.

THE Power that he gave them over Devils, and to heal Diſeaſes, was, that they might preach the Kingdom of God.

THIS whole Chapter has this main Scope. The *Phariſees* and *Scribes* had been

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* *Mark* iii, 14. and *Luke* vi, 14.

very

very unfaithful in this Work: They had nothing at Heart but their Reputation, Power, and Wealth. *Jeſus* therefore urges his Apoſtles to all Purity and Sincerity, as thoſe that knew and conſidered that all Things are open to God, and ſhall be expos'd before all the World, † in the final Judgments: And ſince they muſt run great Hazards, their Lives be always in Danger, and in the End laid down in this Work, he balances their Fear by the Neceſſity that he lays on them; by the Awes of God's abſolute Power of Life and Death and all Futurity. He aſſures them of the kind and vigilant Providence of God over all employ'd in this Work; and that they muſt never ſee his Face, or ſtand before the Son of Man, nor be own'd by him before God and Angels, if they did not acquit themſelves with Courage and Reſolution, in the Face of all oppoſing Powers; and that in all their Conflicts with eccleſiaſtical and civil Powers, the Holy Ghoſt ſhou'd teach them what to ſay, and give ſuch a Spirit and Wiſdom as ſhou'd be irreſiſtible.

WHILE *Jeſus* is intent on this Inſtruction, he is interrupted, by one, whoſe Heart was full of a worldly Diſappointment,

† V. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

in

in hope, that a Reſpect paid to *Jeſus* would engage him to interpoſe with an injurious Brother to do him Right in the Partition of their paternal Inheritance. Our Lord takes him ſhort in the Words of the Text, and rebukes his Impertinence, and then reſumes his Point, goes on with his Inſtructions and Motives for their great Work, and ſhews them the joyful Proſpects that might bear them up againſt all Oppoſition; the Regard of God to them, the Rewards of Glory to the Faithful, and the righteous Severity to the Perfidious and Negligent. Thus he fix'd their Hearts in that Reſolution, that carry'd them through their Work, and enabled them to endure to the End.

THE Anſwer to that Interruption which was given our Saviour in the Courſe of his Inſtruction requires our Attention at preſent, becauſe a Mind ſtrongly prejudic'd againſt *Chriſt* and his Religion, will be ready to take Occaſion of Complaint from this Conduct.

THAT ſuch a Slight put upon a Petition of Right, will leave the Minds of Men, looſe and indifferent to the Good of the Publick.

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* V. 49. 53. 34. 37. 43.

THE Haters of *Reformation* too, will be ready to hug themſelves, upon *Jeſus* his declining to meddle in civil Affairs; and think it enough to quaſh and condemn the Proceeding of every private Chriſtian, that has a prying Eye into the immoral Behaviour of thoſe whoſe Luſts tranſport them to break the Laws, the Bands of civil SOCIETY. But it is no Difficulty to wipe off the Aſperſion, and ſet this Scripture ſtrait from the perverſe Wreſtings of unſtable Men.

HOW inconcluſive is the Argument both Ways?

CHRIST wou'd not be interrupted in his Inſtructions to his Diſciples, to fit them for the Publiſhing the Kingdom of God to reform Mankind.

THEREFORE he would have all civil Government neglected.

OR, he condemns Covetouſneſs, and ſhews the Occaſion it gives to Iniquity and Oppreſſion.

THEREFORE he leaves no Remedy for any injur'd and oppreſs'd Right, but takes away the Benefit of the Law from every Man that ſhall be a Convert to his Religion.

AS if the Current of the Law muſt be ſtop'd, when the Word of God has a free Courſe. The Fallacy of ſuch Reaſoning is palpable to the loweſt Underſtanding.

AND

AND they'll find themſelves as much miſtaken, who conclude, that becauſe Chriſt wou'd not take a civil Office, therefore no Chriſtian may either become a Magiſtrate, or be aiding and aſſiſting to the civil Magiſtrate to keep the Peace, and bring Offenders, againſt the Law, to deſerved Puniſhment.

WHEREAS Religion and Law are the moſt Friendly, and Harmonious Things in the World. Whatever the Law preſcribes to the outward Man, Religion writes in the Heart; and forbids the Thought afar off, that conceives any Immorality, or Impiety. It urgeth the Magiſtrate to his Duty, and the Subject to ſtudy every Thing that is Juſt and Honeſt, and Profitable to SOCIETY.

THE Quæry of the Text, *Who made me a Judge, or a Divider over you?* Is by no Means unfriendly to the Rights and Properties of Men; it puts no Slight upon their important Affairs, and valuable Intereſts; it don't leave the Profeſſors of Religion to lawleſs Violence, Encroachments, and Uſurpations, on their natural or acquir'd Rights, but only points out the true Limits between the civil Judicature, and the prophetick Office; the civil Law, and the Principles and Obligations of Religion. Chriſt and his Apoſtles were zealouſly engag'd in a thorough Reformation, by publiſhing

liſhing the Principles of it, and wou'd not any Way interfere with thoſe employ'd in any Part of it.

THE Check here given will only ſet us Right in the Conduct of all Attempts for *Reformation*, and fully juſtify thoſe laudable SOCIETIES amongſt us, that, upon matureſt Conſideration, have engag'd in this neceſſary and glorious Undertaking.

THERE are two main Engines that muſt be employ'd in this difficult Work, two different Characters that are ſuſtain'd in this Account; here is Work for the Judge, and for every Member of the civil SOCIETY.

AND Work for the Prophet and Apoſtle, and for every Member of the religious SOCIETY, the Houſe, and Church, and Kingdom of God; and every Diſciple of Chriſt is obliged to ſeek the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs. The Knowledge of the Truths of Religion, is the moſt powerful Spring of true *Reformation*. Theſe indeed are not to be propagated by any Force, but that of Inſtruction, Conviction of the Mind, and Declarations of the Will of God, ſure Reports brought from Heaven, with proper Credentials produced by all that pretend hereto.

CHRIST was intent upon this, going about teaching all that came to him, exposing and condemning all Kinds of Evil, so that *John* declar'd of him, that he laid * *the Ax to the Root*, urging them by the Terrors of a final Extirpation, if they did not immediately repent and reform.

THE *Scribes* and *Pharisees* indeed challeng'd him. *By what Authority dost thou these Things, and who gave thee this Authority?* Now so far was he from destroying civil Authority that he was willing to enter into the Discussion of that Point, if they had been in any Disposition to debate it fairly.

HE doth not except to the Propriety of the Question, but retorts it on them concerning the Ministry of *John*, whose evident Authority they had despised, and who were therefore unworthy of an Answer, which, right, or wrong, those Hypocrites would slight and reject. After all, we shall not be in any Pain for our SOCIETIES of *Reformation*, when this Quæry is fully discussed.

IF they have no Authority, if indeed they have not all true and good Authority, let them be suspended and drop.

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* *Matt.* iii, 10.

WE

We are willing to ſtand and fall by this Quæry, fully conſider'd, and we crave no Favour.

I ſhall take in the fair Reſult of it in three Particulars.

1ſt, 'Tis allow'd that this requires that a Man ſee well to it, that he have a good and competent Authority for all his Actions towards other Perſons.

2d, This muſt be the Rule and Meaſure of our Expectations from others.

3d, This Authority muſt be faithfully obſerv'd and follow'd when it appears.

As to the Firſt of theſe Points that a Man muſt look well to it, that he have a good and competent Authority for his Actions towards others.

The Reaſons of it are plain, the Quæry takes it to be ſelf-evident upon an ordinary Attention, and we are well aware of it. The Manner of Compellation ſeems not to be without Deſign, *Man who made me*, &c. Art thou a Man, and canſt thou expect I ſhou'd act where I have no Authority, that I ſhou'd forget my proper Rank, Station, and Office?

MAN is a Creature that muſt conſult and deliberate, and produce his Reaſons for his Conduct.

AND therefore this Queſtion was fit to ſatisfy this Perſon, and engage him to attend to it, as a uſeful Hint for his own Direction, not to be too forward and enterprizing in any Affair.

IT was not in Contempt and Anger, but in great Propriety to convince him by this Anſwer, that his Expectations were not well grounded. *Jeſus* indeed, doth not call him Friend as he did his Diſciples; the Impertinence forfeited this Tenderneſs, and wou'd not admit of a Commendation, but deſerv'd Reproof: But this ſhall be Gentle, and Wiſe, and diſpoſe him to Calmneſs, and Conſideration, which might prevent raſh, and precipitate Proceedings, and be a greater Benefit than his Part of the Inheritance. For our Underſtandings are not ſo clear that we can immediately ſee all the Circumſtances of Things, by which we ſhou'd form a Judgment, and order our Actions.

IN the Quæry there theſe Reaſons are ſuggeſted.

1*ſt*, THAT a Man is queſtionable for his Actions, by all thoſe that are any Way affected by them.

MEN

MEN will think it hard to be ſubjected to meer Will and Power, where there is no Right of Juriſdiction; nor will even Injuries done give every Man a Right to correct the Injurious; however, this might ſtand in a State of Nature, before divine, or civil Conſtitutions: There indeed it ſeems to be a common Right and Intereſt to reſtrain and ſuppreſs all Unrighteouſneſs, and even to exterminate outrageous and incorrigible Wickedneſs, and to treat the violent and unruly *More ferarum*, and to give no Law to Serpents, or Wolves, that act by none.

BUT when divine, or human and civil Conſtitutions are once ſettled, we muſt, even in Things of Right, act under them, and neither avenge our ſelves, or others, but as the Laws of the SOCIETY permit, or direct us.

THE injurious *Iſraelite* had a Right to ask *Moſes*, † *Who made thee a Prince, or a Judge over us?* as good as *Moſes* had to ask him, *Wherefore ſmiteſt thou thy Fellow?* Only he wou'd not take an Anſwer, * *For* Moſes *ſuppos'd his Brethren wou'd have known that*

† Exod. ii, 13, 14. * Acts vii, 25. 30.

God

God by his Hand would deliver them, but they understood not; † and he was afterward more fully qualified to answer the Question and do the Work.

2*d*, THAT our own Minds will Question us. We are not to act rashly, and on the first Appearance of Things, just as our Humour and Inclination, or sudden Passions may prompt us. We are not to erect our selves into an Office, or assume a Jurisdiction to busy our selves, and intermeddle in the Affairs of others, without a proper Call. * 'Tis foolish and dangerous to meddle as we pass by, with any Strife not belonging to us. † To be *Busy-Bodies, wandering about from House to House, thrusting ourselves into every Thing, the Apostle declares to be a disorderly Walking.*

3*dly*, THAT where the Law is open, and there are Deputies, and Men may implead one another, and determine Matters in a lawful Assembly, we are in Danger

† Exod. iii, 11. 15. * Prov. xxvi, 17. † 1 Pet. iv, 15. ἀλλοτριεπισκοποι μειεργοι. 1 Tim. v, 13. 2 Thess. iii, 11. ἀτάκτως.

of

of being call'd in Question, when there is no Cause whereby we may give an Account of our Actions. * So the Town Clerk of *Ephesus* discreetly quell'd the Uproar, refering the Rioters to determine Matters in a lawful Assembly.

If our Lord had intermeddled in the Matter requir'd, the *Jews* wou'd immediately have taken the Advantage, either at their own Council, or the *Roman* Tribunal.

We are thus lead to the second Point, which this Quæry supports. That this Authority must be the Rule of our Expectations from others: That is, we must consider what is to be allow'd as competent and sufficient Authority, for any Persons acting towards other Men.

We must expect and be ready to answer this Quæry, when we require, or perform such Actions. What Constitution doth warrant Men so to act?

Now this will make it appear that *Christ* did not by this discharge his Disciples from all Regard to the Actions and Behaviour of others; but only regulate them by such Constitutions, Authority and Judicature, as they should be cast under.

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* Acts xix, 36. 40.

WHO made me a Judge, or a Divider? This must signify some Settlement, some rightful Constitution; there must be some Source and Fountain of Justice, some Power that is Original and Supream, that immediately and directly gives a Character, and Authority for Jurisdiction over others; and without this, we can have nothing to do to controul the Will, stop the Course, or censure the Actions, or constrain the Compliance, and Regard of other Men. Without this we cannot call them to account, or punish them when they have done amiss.

NOTHING can be plainer than this Assertion of a Constitution and Judicature, under which proper Persons are to act for the Peace and good Order of every SOCIETY, City, or Kingdom.

SOME Constitution thus suppos'd, we may enquire what that Constitution is that will be sufficient Authority.

IT must be either Divine, or Human: The Law of Nature, or expres Revelation from God, or the Compacts and Agreements enter'd into by Men.

GOD may in what Way he pleaseth, in Right of his supream Dominion, settle any Government in any Nation of the Earth, and set their Bounds and Limits; give them Statutes and Judgments, Judges, or Kings, and mix their Character with that

that of Prophets, or Priests, as seems good to him; he may in them settle the civil and the religious SOCIETIES, and make this the Glory of a People to be himself their King and their God, and keep his Court among them; he can fix and settle penal Laws, and oblige all in Office under him to the Execution of them, or give them the Power to relax, or mitigate according to their Discretion upon all the Circumstances of Actions.

IN such Settlements all Persons have their Office, and Rank, and Service appointed, and act with Authority within the Bounds of such an Appointment.

UNDER this Settlement the Blessed *Jesus* the Son of God was sent by the Father, not for civil Jurisdiction, but as a Prophet to save his People from their Sins, and tho' he was anointed King * *yet his Kingdom was not of this World.* It was only to reveal, explain, and ascertain the great Truths of Religion, to reform all the Corruptions of it, to settle the spiritual Worship of God who is a Spirit; and by his Example, Precepts and Promises to form the Minds of Men to universal Righteousness and Holyness, to every Virtue and

* *John* viii, 36.

Duty towards God and Man, and the Perfection and Happineſs of their own Nature. So he built and ſettled his Church in the World; he lov'd it, and *gave Himſelf for it to redeem it from all Iniquity, and to purify to himſelf a peculiar People zealous of good Works*: But he left no coercive Powers, but what were purely Spiritual, with the appointed Miniſters of his Religion, and in no other Way reſented Refuſals, or puniſh'd the Diſobedience, or Apoſtacy of thoſe that profeſs'd Submiſſion; he will have only a willing People without any Conſtraints, but thoſe of Reaſon and Love, and the Awes and Dread of a divine Vengeance and future Judgment.

THE Deſpiſers of *Moſes*'s Law died without Mercy under two or three Witneſſes; and one wou'd be apt to think that they ſhou'd be deem'd worthy to ſuffer a ſorer preſent Puniſhment, that ſhould diſobey the Son of God, tread him under Foot, and count the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith they were ſanctified, an unholy Thing, and do Deſpite to the Spirit of Grace: Yet all this is turn'd another Way. 'Tis not temporal Death, or Fines and Impriſonment, but a Vengeance from God: He takes it into his own Hand, for ſaith the Apoſtle, *We know him that hath ſaid Vengeance is mine, I will recompence ſaith the Lord.* And again, *The Lord ſhall judge his People, and it is a fearful*

ful Thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God. All our Expectations therefore from Chriſtians muſt be according to this Settlement.

BUT is there now no other Conſtitution but this, or doth a profeſſed Submiſſion to this, diſſolve every other Conſtitution? No, by no Means.

THE Goſpel meddled not with any civil Settlement in the World, but left Men to abide in every State wherein they were called.

IT did not unhinge any Government. It teaches Men a due Regard to thoſe Conſtitutions, that all Parts of the World are fallen into, by the Diſpoſal of Providence through the Conſent, Agreements and Aſſociation of Men; and teacheth all its Profeſſors to be ſubmiſſive and obedient, * *To ſubmit themſelves to every Ordinance of Men, whether to the King as Supream; or unto Governours, as thoſe that are ſent by him for the Puniſhment of evil Doers, and the Praiſe of them that do well.* There are theſe great and high Ends of Providence to be ſerv'd by all theſe Orders in the World, and we are a Part of theſe SOCIETIES ſo conſtituted, whereever God diſpoſeth us, and muſt pray for

* *1 Peter* ii. 13, 14.

their Peace, and ſtudy their Welfare and Proſperity; and in every Inſtance approve ourſelves uſeful Members of SOCIETY, uſing all peaceable Endeavours to produce good and wholſome Laws and Orders to regulate the Community, and give all faithful Aſſiſtance in our Power, to the Execution of thoſe Laws.

THE Judge now conſtituted, and the Government ſettled, by the Conſent of a free People, empower every Man to act for the Good of the Community, and 'tis evidently Virtuous, and Praiſe worthy, and to be expected that every Chriſtian ſhou'd think on ſuch Things.

AND therefore, it is to be expected, that the Members of the Community ſhou'd Confer and Conſult, and enter into SOCIETIES to ſuch Purpoſes. This is the very Law of Nature. Man was not form'd for Solitude, but SOCIETY. A Similitude of Nature endears us, a common Intereſt obligeth us, and the Defect of our Powers, to be reliev'd only by Union and Combination, points as much to the Obligations to help each other, as the Joints in the Human Body ſhow the proper Supply of every Part. *The

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* Eph. iv, 16.

whole

whole Body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every Joint ſupplyeth, according to the effectual Working in the Meaſure of every Part, maketh encreaſe of the Body. † *'Tis by Joints and Bands that Nouriſhment is miniſtred, and all knit together encreaſeth.*

If the Members of the Body were found ſeparate, yet their Relation to one another wou'd appear, they wou'd own one another, and their proper Place and Situation ſoon be diſcern'd, and each appear uſeleſs, 'till they were brought to act in Conjunction.

There is therefore no Want of Authority for this, and the Expectation of it is moſt juſt and reaſonable.

Again the Penalties fix'd by ſuch Settlements are no Diſcharge from the Expectation of our Endeavours to promote the Execution of the Laws.

If indeed it had been declared the Will of God by *Jeſus Chriſt*, that the Actions of Men ſhould entirely be refered to a future Judgment, and not be cognizable at any human Tribunal, the Chriſtian muſt have been concluded by it, and have had no other Means of *Reformation*, than the Diſplay of the Truths of Religion: But this is an Injurious Suppoſition, and the Ene-

† Col. ii, 19.

mies

mies of Chriſtianity have no ſuch Advantage againſt it.

THE *Scribes* and *Phariſees* ſought this Occaſion to accuſe *Chriſt*, when they brought the Adulterous Woman before him; thinking his Tenderneſs to *Publicans* and *Sinners* would have induc'd him to cancel an Expreſs penal Law of *Moſes*.

HE wiſely clears himſelf of the Snare, and would not take upon him either to execute, or annul the Law, but diſmiſſeth the Woman with a ſolemn Warning to Sin no more; and when he had ſhown how unfit it was for their guilty ſelves, to carry Matters to utmoſt Rigors, he leaves the civil Conſtitution in the State in which he found it, and doth not diſallow their Zeal, but expoſe their Hypocriſy.

HE hath indeed given new Laws of Patience and Forbearance, has forbidden private Revenge, and ſtrong Reſentments of tolerable Injuries, while there is any Hope of over-coming Evil with Good: This is no more than to do for others what our ſelves need from the great Judge of all the Earth.

HE hath oblig'd us to an Imitation of God, to love our Enemies, and not to render Evil for Evil; but this is only to ſhow an inward and ſincere Charity, even

to the Unjuſt, and the Evil, * *That we may be perfect, as our Father in Heaven is perfect*, and ſhow our ſelves Superior to all Provocations, and ſatisfy'd with the glorious Rewards, promis'd to ſuch exalted Virtue, and ſo near an Imitation of the bleſſed *Jeſus*.

THE Chriſtian Spirit never breathes Revenge, it ſeeks the Converſion even of Enemies. But doth it therefore take the Rod out of the Parents Hand, or doth it beat the Sword of the Magiſtrate into the Plowſhare, or the Spear of juſt War into the pruning Hook? Doth it prohibit Self-defence, and deſtroy the Claims of Right of any Bodies of People, or particular Perſons, when they become Chriſtians?

WE have indeed ſeen ſome Men ſo abſurd; but this has been the odd Turn of their own Brain, and can never be prov'd againſt the Chriſtian Inſtitution. It had then been a juſt Exclamation againſt the Apoſtles, † *The Men, who have turn'd the World upſide down, are come hither alſo.*

BUT the Matter is far otherwiſe. *Chriſt* truly gave himſelf for us, but he never gave up Men to Confuſion and Anarchy, nor the natural Rights, and Li-

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* Mat. v, 48. † Acts xvii, 6.

berties

berties of Men, to Violence and Tyranny. He never purchas'd, or proclaim'd a Liberty to Men to be immoral and diſorderly with Impunity, either in this, or the other World. No, in all the Peace of his Government, 'tis declar'd by the Prophet, * *With Righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the Poor, and reprove with Equity for the Meek of the Earth. And he ſhall ſmite the Earth with the Rod of his Mouth, and with the Breath of his Lips he ſhall ſlay the Wicked.*

THAT the Power and Authority of the Magiſtrate, to puniſh Evil-doers is the Will of God, and conſequently never ſet aſide by *Jeſus Chriſt* is moſt evident, when all Chriſtians are enjoin'd to pray, † *and give Thanks for Kings, and all in Authority* and Eminence, for noble Ends and Purpoſes, that they may uſe the Means in their Hands, *that we may lead quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godlineſs, and Honeſty, and this is good and acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour.* * *Theſe Powers are ordained of God to be a Terror to evil Works, the Power is a Miniſter of God, that Evil-doers may be afraid ſince he beareth not the Sword in vain, but is a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil.*

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* H. xi, 4. † 1 Tim. ii, 1, 2, 3. * Rom. xiii, 1, 2, 3, 4.

THE Words of *Chriſt* are as pertinent to all civil SOCIETIES, and every Member of them, as they were to the *Jews* about the divine Conſtitutions that they glory'd in, * *Think not that I am come to deſtroy the Law, and the Prophets: I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfill.* One of his glorious Titles is our Law-giver, and Laws without Penalties wou'd be Lame and Defective. That he that doth Evil ſhou'd ſuffer Evil, that pain ſhou'd follow Trangreſſion, † *and the Serpent bite him that breaketh the Hedge*, or Boundaries of good Laws; is but a reaſonable Expectation. 'Tis the Apoſtles Declaration, * *That he that doth Wrong, ſhall ſuffer for the Wrong which he hath done, and there is no Reſpect of Perſons.*

AS the Commandments given by *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, have the moſt evident Tendency to the Proſperity of all civil SOCIETIES, ſo the Threatenings frequently denounc'd in the Goſpel, on the Contempt of them, are an Authority for all thoſe Penalties equal to the Crimes committed under thoſe Settlements, which have a Foundation of Right and Tendency to the Tranquility and Welfare of the

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* Mat. v, 17. † Ec. x, 8. * Col. iii, 25.

SOCIETY. A Right of Puniſhment ariſes from the Sence and Will of thoſe who conſociate for the common Benefit, whereby they engage to mutual Help and Defence, and tye the Knot of Union double, by ſubjecting themſelves to Penalities proportioned to their Neglect, Tranſgreſſions, and the Conſequences thereof to the SOCIETY: And the Application and Inflicting theſe, is as much the Concern of every Member, under the Direction of the Law, as the publick Good; in the Security, or Danger, of which, every Member muſt be happy, or ſuffer.

THE Law of *Moſes*, which appears to have been a Pattern both to *Greeks* and *Romans*, tho' they both caſt a Contempt on the *Jews*, through a Spirit of Pride and Envy, and judging of the Laws of *Moſes*, without underſtanding the Reaſons of them; this Law, I ſay, beſides the ſpiritual Demands of inward Reverence to God, and Love to their Neighbour, and the many Promiſes and Bleſſings annex'd to it by him who ſearch'd their Hearts, and could puniſh Diſobedience in another World; uſed the needful Coercion of many penal Statutes, that the Fear of Suffering might ſtrengthen the Fences of Virtue, and keep Men from Vice, and its Effects; and the Obligations of this Law, to give Evidence in order to convict the Criminals, and bring them to Puniſh-

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ment, is notorious beyond the Need of Examples.

Now tho' that divine Law had its Peculiars, that cou'd not befit another People, yet where the Reaſons of Things are in a Parity to all Societies, there it becomes an Authority, and directs and juſtifies a Conformity of our Actions, in the Diſcovery and Puniſhment of thoſe vicious Practices, which tend to Diſorder and Miſchief.

Thus God appears to be not a God of Confuſion, but of Peace, and to Father and Favour every juſt Settlement of Men, and owns all righteous Governours, as Sons of God in an eminent Senſe, and obligeth their Subjects to promote the Execution of their juſt and wholeſome Laws: So that there is no Want of Authority to call Men out to a reaſonable Proſecution of thoſe who violate them, to ſuppreſs Vice of every Kind, to prevent the Ruin, and advance the Proſperity of every Society, or Nation.

There is yet one Thing more to be expected in this Caſe, and that is a cloſe Attention to the great Ends of ſuch Conſtitutions. It muſt be conſider'd, that the Ends muſt direct the Settlements, the Judges themſelves and all that act under them; they are all to be juſtify'd, or diſallow'd by theſe, they are all limited and

tyed up by the juſt Ends of their Actings; and eſpecially in the inflicting of Penalties, it muſt be peculiarly the Conſtitution that muſt be regarded.

It muſt be the Benefit of the Publick, 'tis not the Hurt and Suffering, the Diſgrace, or Diſtreſs and Deſtruction of the Criminal; not the Indignation, or any Paſſion of the Judge, or the Injur'd, or the Proſecutor, that muſt be ſought and intended; only the Suppreſſing of Wickedneſs, and the Inclinations to it, which are apprehended, that muſt be deſign'd in every Execution. Theſe are the Ends of all divine Judgments, the taking away Sin: * *They are all our Examples, to the Intent that we may not luſt after Evil Things as they luſted.*

As to Offenders themſelves, 'tis their Correction, their Reformation, as well as to ſtop Contagion; 'tis their real Good, even the extreme Penalty Death itſelf, is not only neceſſary for the publick Safety, but the Intereſt of the harden'd and incorrigible Sinner, whoſe preſumptuous Crimes, make it better that he had never been born; and thereſoee that ſuch a Bound ſhou'd be ſet to his miſchievous

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* 1 Cor. x, 6.

Temper,

Temper, rather than to let it render him more guilty and execrable. The Preſervation of the Innocent and Virtuous, and the Security of their Rights may often demand this.

ANY other Ends contrary to, and ſeparate from theſe, wou'd unhallow the Courſe of Juſtice, and make the Proſecutor as guilty and criminal as the accuſed. Conſtitutions are ſacred and tender Things, and muſt be ſettled with the exacteſt Reaſon and Deliberation, and are not form'd to gratify the Paſſions of any, but to ſecure the Good of the Whole.

3*dly*, THE Rule thus ſettled, and the Conſtitution fix'd, the third Particular takes Place, *viz.*

THAT this Authority and Conſtitution muſt be religiouſly obſerv'd, and faithfully follow'd.

ALL Perſons in the Station and Rank in which they are placed, muſt regard it, and no Member of the SOCIETY is excus'd, or unconcern'd; none can ſay that they have nothing to do in it, or ſay to others, what is that to you? The Exception form'd on this Quæry, turns to a full Vindication of every Member of our SOCIETIES for *Reformation*; and the Judgment will lie heavy on all that neglect their Duty in ſuch a Service. This is

their

their clear Call to what they undertake, and to go on ſteadily in their Work; they ſtand clear of Ambition, Covetouſneſs, perſonal Pique, and a buſy Humour: They have lift up their Hands to God, and renounced the hidden Things of Diſhoneſty. Their Rules approve themſelves to every Man's Conſcience in the Sight of God, and they are endeavouring to keep their Hearts and ſquare their Actions to them. If there be any Defects, as there is nothing perfect, and no juſt Man that ſinneth not, they ſtand the Reproof and Correction of every Member of their SOCIETY, and of the Oracles of the Law, if in any Thing they offend againſt the Laws of the Land; they have been again and again call'd upon by royal Proclamations, by Acts of Parliament, by the Suffrages of upright Judges, pious Biſhops, and vigilant Magiſtrates of the Peace; and can truſt that it is of God, and for God, in Love to all Mankind, and particularly to their dear Country, for the Preſervation of its Liberties, the retrieving its Honour, the Proſperity of its Trade, and the Good of Poſterity, that they thus aſſociate. Can you then believe that they have but little Encouragement? That few join themſelves to them? That few conſider the Expences of ſuch an Undertaknig? Can you believe that any in Authority, that any Magiſtrates, thoſe that can't ſay,

Who made me a Judge, or a Divider over you? That are too proud of their Posts to quit them, and too insensible of their Duty to fill and adorn them; are cold and indifferent, or cross and opposite to their brave Attempts? I must own these Things are strange indeed, and I wish they were incredible.

To the Glory of God and the immortal Honour of an illustrious King, and his wise and just Administration, the Law has its free Course, the Truths of Religion, their free Publication, religious Assemblies, and reforming SOCIETIES meet without Disturbance, and are not charg'd with Riot and Breach of the Peace; but it must be a deep Lamentation, that many are meer Spectators of such an Undertaking, and in no Pain about its Success, or Miscarriage, as if there were no Contagion in bad Examples, no Provocation to God in open Vice and Prophaneness, no tremendous Threatenings on Record in the Word of God, against corrupt and sinful Nations; as if the Deluge of the old World, the Ashes of *Sodom* and *Gomorah*, the Plagues of *Egypt*, and the Extirpation of the seven devoted and accursed Nations, and all the Sufferings and Servitude of the corrupted *Israelites*, the long Captivity of the *Jews*, and the utter Desolation of *Jerusalem*, and Dispersion of the *Jews*, all declar'd by many Prophets

phets to be for the Corruptions and Immoralities that are found among us at a great Height, with an increasing Flood of the most unnatural Abominations, as if all these were Fiction and Fable; *They are Eating and Drinking, Marrying and giving in Marriage*, and put the evil Day, and plainest Consequences far from them.

EVERY Vision and Warning is for a long Time to come, and every Attempt for *Reformation* too soon, or too much. None tremble at the Word of God, nor fear his Judgments, nor stir up themselves to lay hold on God, or be zealous for his Honour, or that of their Country. Where is the *Phineas*, the *Ezra*, the *Nehemiah*, the *Elijah*? If God's Jealousy for us had been measur'd by our Zeal for God, and *Reformation*, we had not now enjoy'd those Laws that call us to this Work; nor those Liberties that give us an Opportunity for it.

NEVERTHELESS the Neglects of some do not lessen the Obligations on others, to attend to their Duty; since it appears, you are authorized by God, by all right Reason, and by the Laws of the Country, you must act according to the Stations in which you are fixed. The Tendencies of Vice and Prophaneness to common Ruin, and the happy Influences of Sobriety and Righteousness to national Prosperity and Peace, lay a Necessity upon all to act as they have Capacity

ty and Opportunity to beat down Wickedneſs, and keep Virtue in Heart and Countenance.

THE Accounts of your Conſtitution are ſo good that I have eaſily made it appear, that the Quæry of the Text cannot fairly be turn'd againſt you, can never reaſonably be conſtrued to any Suſpicion of yourſelves, or to require any Review of a Point ſo well ſettled, unleſs it be to take the Pleaſure, and refreſh the Vigour of your Spirits in ſo important a Service. Surely if there be any Truth in the Principles of Religion; if Government and Laws have any Foundation in Nature and Reaſon, if there be any Law of Nature, or Wiſdom in SOCIETY, if Juſtice be any Thing more than Humour, if there be any ſolid and ſtrong Obligations to take hold on the Mind and Conſcience of Man, to reſtrain his Appetites, and regulate his Paſſions, and form him to Sobriety and Righteouſneſs; if there be any Bounds between Right and Wrong, unleſs Good and Evil, Sweet and Bitter be the ſame Things, unleſs Confuſion be more beautiful and beneficial than Order and Peace; you have Right and Reaſon on your Side, you have Conſcience, and every Authority to urge you to Activity; and unleſs Darkneſs get the better of Light, which always conquers at its firſt Appearance, unleſs the Powers of Darkneſs over-

come the Kingdom of God, and his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, you muſt be Victorious and Triumphant, if you continue your Warfare.

YOUR SOCIETIES have been ſo well defended and ſo agreeably to yourſelves directed, that I have had only the eaſy Part to bruſh away a Cobweb of very ſlender Pretence againſt you. I know not any Thing to be added to the complete Defences and Directions which have been offer'd to the World. I take it we aſſemble rather to Glory, that you keep the Field, that you ſtill ſubſiſt, that there is a Body that will ſtand by this Cauſe of God and Virtue in the World, which will live and die by it, that being not weak in Faith, you conſider not the Smallneſs of your Beginnings, the Delays of your Expectations, or any diſcouraging Appearances, that you ſtagger not at the Promiſes of God through Unbelief, but are ſtrong in Faith giving Glory to God, being fully perſwaded, that what he has promiſed he is able to perform, and if you reſiſt the Devil he ſhall flee, and the *Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt you.*

I only put you in Remembrance, to ſtir up the Gift of God that is in you, to give a new Vigour to the ſacred Fire of a regular Zeal for God, and Charity towards Men, and Love to the Nation; to wipe away the Reproach of notorious and audacious Immoralities, to make Examples of

thoſe

thoſe who dare to give Defiance to divine and humen Laws.

Look once again at the bright Patterns that have been ſet before you in all Ages; *Abel* the firſt Martyr died in the Cauſe, ſlain becauſe his Works were Righteous; *Noah* brought a Deluge on the World of Deſpiſers of his reforming Zeal; *Lot* vexed at the filthy Converſation of *Sodom*, ſaw Hell-Fire kindle upon the wicked Wretches that had inſulted and vexed his righteous Soul, and deſpiſed his Admonitions, as pretending to Authority, * *He will needs be a Judge.* *Moſes* labour'd the *Reformation* of the ſtupid *Iſrealites* with a Mixture of Meekneſs and Severity, and denounc'd a Train of Judgments that wou'd attend the Deſpiſers of his Laws. *Eli*'s Indifference in it was the Ruin of his Family and his own Death, † *Becauſe his Sons were Vile and he reſtrain'd them not.*

PHINEAS, his Zeal, has *an everlaſting Memorial*; that of *Elijah* became a fiery Chariot wherein he aſcended to Heaven. Time would fail to ſpeak of all the Worthies that gain'd a good Report in this Service; and whoever ſtand in the Liſt and approve themſelves Faithful, cannot fail of their Reward, tho' they may miſs of their

* *Gen.* xix, 9. † 1 *Sam.* iii, 13.

deſir'd End in the preſent State; even the meaneſt Aſſiſtant to ſuch a Cauſe will appear in their Train and Share in their Glory.

SINCE therefore you can ſo clearly anſwer this proper Quæry, and are ſure you do not act without ſeeing that you have good Authority for it, let this have its proper Moment to encreaſe and renew your Vigour. Go on tho' vilify'd and traduc'd by wicked and unreaſonable Men; their Contempt is fit to excite your Ardour, and Reſolution, like *David*, when his Zeal for God was deſpis'd by the Daughter of *Saul*, *I will yet be more vile than thus*, concluding that he ſhould be *had in Honour* of all thoſe that were Wiſe and Good. † *Tho' Correction is grievous to him that forſaketh the Way, and the Scorner loveth not one that reproveth him, neither will he go into the Wiſe*; yet all that have any Principles of Wiſdom and Juſtice will applaud your Deſigns and bid you God ſpeed.

THIS Authority alſo calls upon all that are Lovers of Virtue and good Government to join in ſo juſtifiable SOCIETIES, 'tis not in a Point of Superſtition, or party Zeal; but upon flagrant Wickedneſs, that we cry out, as they did, * *Men of* Iſrael *help*, for theſe Men practice againſt the

† *Prov.* xv, 10, 12. * *Acts* xxi, 28.

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People and the Law, and pollute this Place, they *walk in the Lusts of Uncleanness, and despise Government.* * *They are presumptuous and self-will'd, and are not afraid to speak Evil of Dignities*; and shall such Persons be let alone, shall none attempt to restrain their Wickedness? Shall insolent and daring Vice defy God and Man, and none have the Spirit to encounter, and suppress it? Shall there be so many Clubs and Associations in every Affair of Life? So much superstitious and party Zeal in the World, and none for the Honour of Virtue?

Do not Goodness and Virtue deserve, or do they not need Friends to sustain them? The God of Righteousness, is indeed Omnipotent, and needs not our Help; but as he loveth Righteousness, he has cast Things into such a State, as will prove who is on its Side, and will declare every Thing done for this, as if it had been done for himself. Openly then avow so good a Cause, and be no more indifferent, than you would be to quench a Flame in a Neighbourhood, or to keep out the *Plague* from a Country, or prevent its Spreading. What is it that you fear? The Reproach, the Hatred, the Obloquy of the Multitude of the Prophane and Wicked. These vile Persons are justly to be *contemned* rather than fear'd, shake

* 2 *Pet.* ii, 10

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but the Rod and the Slave will fly. The Wicked may hate you, but they cannot deſpiſe you, unleſs they ſee you timorous and ſneaking; when you have the better Cauſe, and the beſt Alliances. They find ſomewhat within them that bows to the Virtue, and confeſſeth the Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs which they ſee in the ſincere Advocates of *Reformation*; and muſt wiſh to be with them in Death, tho' they now gnaſh their Teeth upon them, and blaſpheme.

As you have nothing to fear, ſo you have much to induce you to obſerve, and follow the evident Authority, that every Man hath to promote *Reformation*. You will lay a real Obligation, upon thoſe that are reſtrain'd from Sin and Ruin. The leaving Men to ſin, without warning, is the greateſt Cruelty, and has the moſt fatal Conſequence. Tho' a vile Perſon be contemptible, having no claim to Honour and Reſpect, yet his Powers and Capacities, as a Creature of God, of our own Blood, and Kind, and for whom *Chriſt* died, are greatly to be reſpected.

You know *Chriſt* has been calumniated, and his Religion reproach'd, for his ſuffering the Devils, at their Requeſt, *to enter into the Herd of Swine*; but wou'd there not be Cauſe to reproach Chriſtians, if by neg-

* *Matt.* viii, 31, 32.

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lect of the Execution of wholeſome penal Statutes, againſt flagrant Crimes, they give *Satan* leave to enter into the numerous Herds, who are ready to caſt themſelves down the Precipice, and periſh for ever. Our Saviour ſuppos'd it a ſtrong Motive to his Diſciples, when he call'd them to leave all and follow him, † *Follow me and I will make you Fiſhers of Men, and ſtraitway they left their Nets and followed him.* We muſt be Lovers of Men, the whole Kind muſt be embraced in the Boſom of our Charity, and be valued more than all the World beſide, and every Lover of Mankind, muſt be inſpir'd with the Deſire, and pleas'd with the Succeſs of ſuch a Work.

By joining in this Work you will lay your Country, and all Poſterity under great Obligations. They will riſe up and call you Bleſſed, they will give you a juſt Share of that Compliment paid to *Felix*: * *By thee we enjoy great Quietneſs, and worthy Deeds are done unto the Nation by thy Providence, we accept it always with all Thankfulneſs.* They will ſay with Gratitude had it not been for thoſe happy Societies we had ſat in Darkneſs, and ſuffer'd all the Confuſions and Infections of Vice: Or ſay with Lamentation, if thoſe Societies had not been diſcouraged and deſerted, we had not been in that lan-

† *Matt.* iv, 19, 20. * *Acts* xxiv 2, 3

guiſh-

guiſhing State of Trade, and low Reputation for Virtue and Sobriety, we now find ourſelves in.

If then any of you not joyn'd in ſuch Societies approve in your Hearts the Cauſe, delay not to own it before Men; if you ſuſpect it, or ſay in your Hearts, *who made me a Judge, or a Reformer*; Inform yourſelves thoroughly of the Deſign, and its Foundations, leaſt you ſhould be found guilty of a Neutrality in the Conflict againſt the Powers of Darkneſs, and *Chriſt* * *be aſham'd of you before God*, and Angels and the whole World.

Let all therefore heartily join in ſo neceſſary and difficult a Work, knowing that whatever be the Diſcouragement, the Cauſe is good, and the Conſtitution juſt by every proper Authority, and whatever may be malictiouſly prated againſt theſe Attempts now, † *Behold the Lord cometh with ten Thouſand of his Saints to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, of all their ungodly Deeds, and of the hard Speeches which ungodly Sinners have ſpoken againſt him.*

* *NOW unto him that is able to keep you from Falling, and to prevent you Faultleſs before the Preſence of his Glory with exceeding Joy; to the only wiſe God our Saviour, be Majeſty, Dominion and Power, both now and ever*, Amen.

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* *Mark* viii. 38. † *Jude* 14, 15. * *Jude* 24.

FINIS.

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